

Military Priority Assailed

45 War Foes On Hill Urge Halt in Trend

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Forty-five anti-war legislators—all but one Democratic—yesterday proposed a program to halt what they said was the increasing militarization of American life.

The thrust of their 61-page report was this: An unchecked complex, led by militarized civilians in the Executive branch and supported by an acquiescent and uninformed Congress, is dominating national priorities.

This process could be reversed, the legislators said, by the creation of new watchdog groups, both inside and outside Congress, to consider military programs from a fresh perspective.

The signers called themselves the "Congressional Conference on the Military Budget and National Priorities."

The report came out of a two-day conference here in March, which was attended by weapons experts and former officials of the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson Administrations as well as the Congressional representatives. The report and a conference transcript will be published as a book this fall.

Nine Senators, including William B. Saxbe (R-Ohio), were listed as adherents of the report. The others, Democrats, were J. William Fulbright (Ark.), Harold E. Hughes (Iowa), George S. McGovern (S.D.), Walter F. Mondale (Minn.), Gaylord Nelson (Wis.), Joseph D. Tydings (Md.), Harrison A. Williams (N.J.) and Stephen M. Young (Ohio).

The 36 Representatives who

signed, all Democrats, came largely from New York and California.

Their degree of attachment to the document is unclear. It contains an insert saying: "Although the recommendations of the conference generally express our views, as sponsors we do not necessarily adopt as our own each and every statement and conclusion stated in this report."

Despite the group's overwhelming Democratic makeup, it says bluntly that the military problem reached a new dimension after the John F. Kennedy Administration came to power in 1961. "The harsh fact is that military considerations today play a greater role in determining American policy than at any time our national history."

The report traces two features of recent Democratic regimes that have contributed to this end. One is the rationalization of the Defense Department under Secretary Robert S. McNamara which destroyed the countervailing power of past rivalries between services and provided much more effective support for every program the military wants. The other was the adoption of a mindless Keynesianism that regarded every public outlay as equally useful, whether it was spent on a bomb or a school.

See ARMS, A4, Col. 3

targeted re-entry vehicle, a missile carrier capable of delivering several nuclear warheads to different points. Apart from the traditional Pentagon-supporting committees, Congress itself, the document says, was not aware of MIRV until this year.

Now it has discovered that no other weapon is more threatening to a self-policing arms agreement since its deployment means neither the Soviet Union nor the United States will know with certainty how many nuclear weapons the other side has.

The report urges an end to testing MRV, dropping the proposed Safeguard anti-ballistic missile system and quick end to the war in Vietnam.

To recapture what the report's signers regard as a diminishing public control over

ARMS, From A1

"We should be clear on one point," the report says. "It is not the uniformed military which has created the present situation, but the civilian leadership and the institutions they have created to centralize and expand the performance of national security functions. The military has been asked to make decisions and accept responsibilities for which it was not prepared . . . Too often responsibility has been abdicated to the military to make broad policy choices, to define the threats—and therefore the priorities—facing this country."

Example Cited

As an example of Congress' silent or ignorant acquiescence, the report cites MIRV, the multiple independently

the military enterprise, the study proposes the following:

- A new Defense Review Office, similar to the General Accounting Office, staffed by independent defense experts to provide Congress with informed analysis of military problems.

- A Temporary National Security Committee of Congressmen and citizens, similar to the pre-war Temporary National Economic Committee, to conduct a critical examination "of the institutional structure of the military-industrial establishment."

- A new standing Congressional Joint Committee on National Priorities "to provide a continuing forum for the review and evaluation" of Federal programs, both defense and non-defense.

- Reduced use by the Pentagon of security classifications in order to give more Con-